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IMPRESSIONS OF THE ESPERANTO CONGRESS AT CAMBRIDGE.

BY MARQUIS L. DE BEAUFONT.

THE impressions which the Cambridge Esperanto Congress made upon me were so very many that I should write a book and not an article if I undertook to specify them all. Since, however, I do not wish to impose upon my readers, I shall limit myself to a choice of the most important of those impressions.

First of all, I brought away with me the thought of *great power*, acquired by the very idea of an international auxiliary language, thanks to Esperanto. That so great a number of persons undertook the fatigues and expense of a long journey, that our Congress was able to present to the world the astonishing spectacle of men speaking thirty-one different tongues, yet all understanding each other readily in our auxiliary language, show conclusively that Esperanto has made progress everywhere. It is not absolute victory, I admit: we are but twenty years old, and an idea needs more than twenty years for the conquest of the world. But from to-day onward, the Congress at Cambridge gives us the certainty of ultimate victory within a relatively short time. Our first two congresses refuted by facts the absurd theory that peoples of diverse speech could not understand each other orally by the aid of an auxiliary tongue. They had also shown that the neo-Latin peoples were surely not the only ones to flock to Esperanto. In fact, representatives of all the great European languages, as well as of a score of languages less important, appeared there; several English-speaking people were in attendance at each congress. And yet our adversaries continued to weary us with their eternal refrain: "Oh, yes, doubtless; but all that is nothing, for Great Britain and North America are not in the Esperanto movement!" Can one say that to-day, after the Cam-

bridge Congress? Has not our stream been swelled by English tributaries? Were there not a goodly number of representatives from Esperanto societies in English-speaking lands? Did not North America clasp the hand of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Esperantujo? A whole English university town receives us royally; municipality, university, students vie with each other in their hospitable welcome; in full congress the American magazine which is the most influential and most widely read in North America, THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, invites us officially to hold our Fourth Congress in the United States, offering us its utmost support; and yet we are able to question the adhesion of the English-speaking people to the Esperanto cause! In truth, I do not see what more our adversaries would have in order to believe.

Well, is not this adhesion of English-speaking peoples by itself alone a confirmation of the power acquired by Esperanto? Does it not carry elsewhere a new power whose importance is measured by the importance and extent of the countries where English is spoken? Does not this adhesion, better than all arguments, refute the affirmation or the hope that English is to be the future international language of the world? To me, who have always predicted it, this is only the natural fruit of the great good sense and of the admirable practical spirit of the Anglo-Saxon race, in the presence of the qualities of Esperanto which answer their end so well; but its consequences must of necessity be so great with respect to our swift and definite success, that I consider this adhesion—henceforth incontestable—one of the greatest events in our Esperanto history.

Another point particularly struck me at the Cambridge Congress; the progress made by Esperantists in the acquirement of their language. At Boulogne, in 1905, only certain orators and certain amateur actors took the risk of speaking in public. At Geneva, in 1906, the number of orators increased; at Cambridge it was superabundant, if I may say so; it was necessary to limit the time for speaking, and sometimes to call down the orator before he had finished. An excellent sign, in spite of its little drawbacks, for it proves that for the great part of those attending the Congress, Esperanto has become so easy to manage that they boldly court the judgment of an audience in this language—which most of them would not dare to do in their mother tongue.

A third point left an equally favorable impression upon me: the special congresses that were held, outside the general sessions, by the various bodies, ideas, etc., represented at the Congress. It was the practical utilization of Esperanto. Lawyers, doctors, soldiers, sailors, merchants, etc., professors, peacemakers, men of science, members of the Red Cross, free-thinkers, Freemasons, Catholics, etc., held their sittings in Esperanto and discussed their special interests; yet for all that, they were no less cordial in the general sessions, or less faithful to the great principle of neutrality observed by the Esperanto body as a whole.

These special congresses, more numerous than at Geneva, are a part of the customs of Esperanto-land. On their side they will be neither less interesting nor less useful to the world than the general Congress. They remind me of a fourth impression, entirely moral, with which I will close.

In these meetings of specialists, various opposing interests were discussed. It would seem, then, as if good feeling must needs have suffered. And yet, as I have just said, the cordiality of relations between the members of the Congress was in no wise impaired. That was because the absolute neutrality of the Esperanto body leaves every one the unbounded right of employing Esperanto as he prefers to propagate and defend his religious, political and social ideas. No one sacrifices any conviction in becoming an Esperantist. On the contrary, all know, on entering our ranks, that every Esperantist enjoys absolute liberty. That is why tolerance and a due regard for the ideas and the convictions of others are so firmly grounded among us that our congresses certainly furnish the finest exhibition of respect, cordiality and reciprocal friendship which it is possible to find amid such a diversity of nations, races, beliefs and interests.

Also, without wishing to exaggerate in the least, without hoping for a perfect world while our poor human nature is so feeble and so prone to evil, I believe that Esperanto will do away with many misunderstandings, will prevent much hatred, and will scatter the seeds of goodness, of tolerance and of love. If that is a crime—one would think so to read certain authors—I take the full and entire responsibility for it before God and man, so far as I have urged or shall continue still to urge the world to commit that crime by the study of Esperanto.

MARQUIS L. DE BEAUFONT.